

ADDRESS BY THE OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL

H.E. MR SALIM AHMED SALIM

TO

THE FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE LIBERATION COMMITTEE

Abuja, 24 May, 1991.

MR CHAIRMAN,
HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS, ONCE AGAIN, A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE AS YOU BEGIN THE MID-YEAR REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN OUR RELENTLESS MARCH TOWARDS THE TOTAL EMANCIPATION OF THE CONTINENT. LET ME, AT THE VERY OUTSET PLACE ON RECORD MY APPRECIATION AND THAT OF THE OAU TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF NIGERIA FOR THEIR IMMENSE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS, IN PARTICULAR, AND FOR THE PROGRESS OF AFRICA, IN GENERAL. WE DO SO, NOT OUT OF COURTESY, BUT OUT OF A PROFOUND SENSE OF RECOGNITION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION. FOR THROUGHOUT THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND THE ASSERTION OF THE DIGNITY OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE, NIGERIA HAS BEEN IN THE FRONTLINE. WE ARE, THEREFORE, GRATIFIED THAT, AT A TIME WHEN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE BULWARK OF INJUSTICE AND INDIGNITY TO OUR PEOPLE HAS REACHED A CRUCIAL PHASE IN SOUTH AFRICA, THIS SESSION OF THE LIBERATION COMMITTEE IS TAKING PLACE IN ABUJA, THE NEW FEDERAL CAPITAL OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY.

MR CHAIRMAN,

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM WHAT OBTAINED WHEN THE COUNCIL MET IN FEBRUARY. THE REPEAL OF THE PILLARS OF APARTHEID IS YET TO MATERIALIZE, THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DETAINEES STILL REMAIN IN JAILS EVEN THOUGH SOME HAVE BEEN RELEASED SINCE THE LAST SESSION AND THE

PREPONDERANT NUMBER OF EXILES ARE YET TO RETURN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRETORIA MINUTE. INSPITE OF ALL THESE, THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE LIFTING OF SANCTIONS HAS RECEIVED ADDED MOMENTUM. THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION OF THE SPIRALING VIOLENCE THAT CONTINUES TO GET WORSE WITH EACH PASSING DAY. AND WHILE THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA ARE SUBJECTED TO CARNAGE, DEVASTATION AND DESTRUCTION, PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S REGIME HAS INCREASINGLY BEEN SPARED WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO PUT AN END TO THE VIOLENCE AND TO MOVE TOWARDS SUBSTANTIVE AND IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES.

THE TASK BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE, THEREFORE, IS HOW AFRICA, IN CONCERT WITH THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA, CAN EFFECTIVELY OVERCOME THE ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE OR EVEN DEVIATE FROM THE SUBSTANCE OF THE STRUGGLE. HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT THE PROCESS OF CHANGE TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF APARTHEID IS NOT ABORTED. A CREDIBLE CONSIDERATION OF HOW TO OVERCOME THE PRESENT CHALLENGES MUST ENTAIL GIVING URGENT CONSIDERATION TO TWO MAIN ISSUES : THE EROSION OF SANCTIONS AND THE VIOLENCE IN THE TOWNSHIPS.

ON THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS, THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, REPRESENTING THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA, HAVE, TIME AND AGAIN, APPEALED TO THE MEMBER STATES OF THE OAU AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO MAINTAIN THE PRESSURE OF SANCTIONS UNTIL APARTHEID HAS BEEN DISMANTLED OR, AT LEAST UNTIL AN IRREVERSIBLE PROCESS TOWARDS ITS ERADICATION IS IN CLEAR EVIDENCE. WE, IN THE OAU, HAVE ALWAYS ACTED IN RESPONSE

TO THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE AS ARTICULATED BY THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. BOTH THE FRONTLINE STATES AND THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON SOUTHERN AFRICA, AFTER AN OBJECTIVE APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, HAVE CAUTIONED AGAINST A PRECIPITOUS LIFTING OF SANCTIONS AND URGED THE RETENTION OR MAINTENANCE OF ALL FORMS OF PRESSURE.

YET ALL THESE PLEAS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO STEM THE TIDE TOWARDS THE LIFTING OF SANCTIONS. INDEED, IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE TREND TOWARDS RELAXING OR LIFTING SANCTIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS GAINING MOMENTUM. THE ACTIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE RECENT DECISION BY THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY TESTIFY TO THIS.

WITHIN OUR CONTINENT, A GROWING NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE MAINTAINING RELATIONS, IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER, WITH SOUTH AFRICA. THIS IS CAUSE FOR SERIOUS CONCERN IN THAT IT UNDERMINES AFRICA'S COHESION AND UNITY ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT ISSUE AND FURTHER TARNISHES THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR ORGANIZATION. IT DIMINISHES ITS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS AND TO CONTRIBUTE, AS IT HAS DONE UNTIL NOW, IN FURTHERING THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID.

MR CHAIRMAN,

THIS IS AN ISSUE OF GRAVE CONCERN BECAUSE IT WOULD SEEM THAT AFRICA IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING UNCLEAR ON THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS. THE QUESTION NOW IS HOW DO WE RECAPTURE OUR

LEADING POSITION ON THE MATTER WITHOUT SURRENDERING ITS ESSENCE. YOU MAY EXCHANGE PRELIMINARY VIEWS ON THE MATTER, AT THIS LEVEL, BUT THE ISSUE IS ALSO ON THE AGENDA OF BOTH THE COUNCIL AND THE ASSEMBLY SO AS TO AFFORD ALL MEMBER STATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EXAMINE THE ISSUE AS FRANKLY AND AS OBJECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. WE HAVE TO BE CREDIBLE TO OURSELVES BEFORE OTHERS CAN TAKE US SERIOUSLY. WHAT IS CRUCIAL IS THAT AFRICA SHOULD NOT BE SEEN TO BE BREAKING RANKS OR UNDERSTOOD RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY TO BE ABETTING THE CAMPAIGN TO UNDERMINE FURTHER THE INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS AGAINST APARTHEID. WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT IS FOR AFRICA TO ADOPT A COMMON AND UNIFIED POSITION. YOUR COMMITTEE MAY, THEREFORE, WISH TO CONDUCT A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION WITH DUE CONSIDERATION FOR THE POSITIVE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE VERY REAL OBSTACLES WHICH STILL HAMPER A GENUINE COMMITMENT TOWARDS DISMANTLING THE APARTHEID SYSTEM.

MR CHAIRMAN,

THE INTERNECINE CONFLICT IS OF EQUAL CONCERN. FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE WATCHED THE SENSELESS CARNAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD SOON END. OUR APPEALS HAVE BEEN TREATED WITH ALMOST CARELESS ABANDON OR LEVITY. AND OUR HOPES FOR AN END TO THE FRATRICIDAL CONFLICT CONTINUE TO WEAR THIN WITH EACH PASSING DAY. UNLESS IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO PRESERVE LAW AND ORDER, THE CONFLICT CAN EASILY ERUPT INTO A CONFLAGRATION.

APART FROM OUR CONCERN FOR THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIVES AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, WE ARE EQUALLY CONCERNED BY THE THREAT, THE VIOLENCE POSES TO THE POLITICAL PROCESS. IT IS MOST UNFORTUNATE THAT OUR BROTHERS SHOULD NOW OPT FOR VIOLENT CONFRONTATION, NOT DIRECTED AGAINST THEIR COMMON ENEMY, BUT AGAINST THEIR FELLOW BROTHERS; AND AT A TIME WHEN THE PEACEFUL OPTION HOLDS THE BEST PROSPECT FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE OPPRESSED, THEN WHATEVER BE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM, THEY SHOULD SETTLE THEM THROUGH DIALOGUE.

THE SEARCH FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE VIOLENCE MUST INVOLVE EVERY COMMUNITY LEADER IN SOUTH AFRICA. AFRICA ALSO HAS A RESPONSIBILITY. IT SHOULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO CONTINUE WATCHING THE CARNAGE FROM THE SIDELINES. IT SHOULD DRAW ON ITS INNERMOST RESOURCE TO HELP BRING ABOUT A SPEEDY END TO THE SENSELESS VIOLENCE. APPEALS ARE NOT ENOUGH AND A DIRECT ENGAGEMENT MAY NOW BE NEEDED. WE CANNOT AND MUST NOT ALLOW THE GAINS OF YEARS OF UNREMITTING STRUGGLE SLIP THROUGH OUR FINGERS BECAUSE OF OUR INABILITY TO SUMMON THE REQUISITE POLITICAL COURAGE AND CHALLENGE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO THE IMPERATIVE OF COOPERATION AND JOINT ACTION. THIS COMMITTEE, THE COUNCIL AND THE ASSEMBLY HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE WHAT CONTRIBUTION COULD BE MADE BY THE OAU IN THE SEARCH FOR A LASTING SOLUTION TO THE VIOLENCE. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE JOINT SESSION OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF THE ANC AND THE PAC IN HARARE, LAST MONTH, ON THE IMPERATIVE OF PUTTING AN END TO THE VIOLENCE.

BUT AS WE URGE THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO ABANDON VIOLENCE, WE MUST ALSO CONTINUE TO DEMAND OF THE APARTHEID AUTHORITIES FULFILMENT OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER. THIS IS ALL THE MORE URGENT GIVEN THAT THERE IS INCREASING EVIDENCE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF SOME ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN FANNING AND ABETTING THE VIOLENCE AS WELL AS PROVIDING WEAPONS TO SOME GROUPS. A PLAN TO CURB THE VIOLENCE MUST INVOLVE THE PHASING AWAY OF THOSE NOTORIOUS HOSTELS AND INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE BAN ON ALL TYPES OF WEAPONS.

MR CHAIRMAN,

YOU MAY RECALL THE BRIEFING TO THIS COMMITTEE AND THE COUNCIL, IN FEBRUARY, ABOUT THE EFFORTS OF THE TWO NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS TO FORGE A UNITED FRONT OF ALL ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF APARTHEID. SINCE THEN, THE TWO MOVEMENTS HAVE ADVANCED A STEP FURTHER IN NOT ONLY LAYING THE BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF A UNITED FRONT BUT ALSO FOR IMPROVING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM. THEIR MEETING IN HARARE, IN APRIL, WAS A LANDMARK. THEY HAVE AGREED TO CONVENE A PATRIOTIC CONGRESS IN AUGUST. THIS WILL BRING TOGETHER ALL DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS. THE TWO MOVEMENTS DESERVE THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND THE SUPPORT OF THE OAU, AT THIS CRUCIAL PHASE OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND ALSO FOR THE CONVENING OF THE CONGRESS IN AUGUST.

ALMOST AT EVERY SESSION OF THIS COMMITTEE IN RECENT YEARS, WE HAVE STRESSED THE NEED FOR INCREASED FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE TWO MOVEMENTS THROUGH THE FINANCIAL OUTLAY OF THIS COMMITTEE AND ALSO ON BILATERAL BASIS BETWEEN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE OAU AND THE MOVEMENTS. THE ALLOCATIONS TO THE MOVEMENTS HAVE NOT SEEN ANY MARKED IMPROVEMENT. AND YET, WE ALL RECOGNIZE THE TASK BEFORE THEM AS BEING FORMIDABLE. IN THAT REGARD, THE COMMITTEE MAY WISH TO EXAMINE AGAIN THE PERRENIAL QUESTION OF ARREARS IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIAL FUND. MONEY REALIZED FROM THE PAYMENT OF ARREARS COULD BE, FOR EXAMPLE, EARMARKED FOR DISBURSEMENT TO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS.

MR CHAIRMAN,
EXCELLENCIES,

THIS FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE OAU LIBERATION COMMITTEE IS TAKING PLACE AT A VERY CRUCIAL PERIOD IN THE FINAL PHASE FOR THE TOTAL LIBERATION OF OUR CONTINENT. I AM CONFIDENT THAT, IN CONSULTATIONS WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, THE COMMITTEE WILL COME UP WITH APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME THE SETBACKS AND CLEAR THE PATH TOWARDS THE TRIUMPH OF FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA. IT IS A CHALLENGE; WE MUST NOT FAIL.

I THANK YOU.